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NOTES AND NEWS.

REMARKS UPON THE CULTS AND CEREMONIES OF WESTERN AFRICA.—When in the few pages devoted to the Dahomeans I described the ceremonies of the priapic cult, which we attended, I limited myself, in passing, to pointing out the direction in which it would be necessary to look for its origin.

This cult, at the foundation of all the public fêtes in ancient Egypt, has survived until the present time in the Canaries. The he-goat played upon the altars the principal rôle, and in ancient Egypt he was associated with the sun. At Mendes he was "the soul of Osiris." Elsewhere, under the name of Mandou-Ra, he was enthroned as the god of war and of voluptuousness. He was also consecrated to the phallic deity Kem.

The alligator and the crocodile, which have the first rank in the religious ceremonies of Dahomey and whose position in the cult is not explained by considerations of terror or of utility, as is that of the serpent of Wydah, also inevitably bring to our minds the religion of ancient Egypt.

Sacred fowls have played a great rôle in all antiquity. To-day, in Alger, they are the only expiatory victims daily sacrificed in a mysterious cult which is practiced in the full light of day. Outside of the town to the west, down the route which leads along the coast, upon a little rocky point, two black sacrificers place themselves, toward nine o'clock in the morning, once or twice a week. The Kabyle women who have sick children present themselves to the sacrificers, each with a pair of fowls, to learn the issue of the malady. The sacrificers take the animals, make a small incision in the throat, and throw them upon the seashore, where they are wet by the waves. At the contact of the water with the wounds the animals beat their wings and convulsively distort themselves before death takes place. The women, squatting upon the shore, attentively watch this short ceremony. As the sacrificer, he finishes his task without a word and restrains himself to maintain his gravity. Does he fear ridicule? It is probable. His firm, defiant manner discourages the questioner, and I do not interrogate him upon the answers he would draw from the examination of the dead fowls.

He is the all-unconscious priest of a forgotten ancient cult, of which nothing but this vestige remains. I repeat that he is a Negro. It is, then, in the homes of the Negroes and by them that this ancient practice is preserved, this sacrifice upon the borders of the sea, the cult which, diffused by the Phœnicians, was without doubt in Africa of Punic origin. Time has passed without bringing any great change in their mentality. What they have formed the habit of doing once they continue to do, so to say, for all time, and when they have said of one of their practices "it is the custom" they have given a reason for its perpetuity which in their eyes is not only sufficient, but peremptory. They do not try to analyze it, still less to explain or criticise it. In the same way, when they have said of the new and extraordinary phenomena which the Europeans often cause them to witness, "it is the manner of the white man," their astonishment is immediately suppressed and their curiosity extinguished.

The essential practices of the Dahomean cult that I have described are identical with those found much nearer the heart of Africa; and it is not the Dahomeans, a band of warriors to whom the sanguinary despotism of a chief has accidentally given a kingdom, who are their propagators or inventors. When Dybowski penetrated the territory of the Ouaddas, upon the Oubangui, at the confluence of the Ombella, their chief, M' Paka, gave him two goats and two fowls, and plucking from the latter a handful of feathers, he said to him, "Throw these upon the head; it is a sign of peace and friendship." Farther on, in the country of the Banzivis, as soon as he arrived the chief, Bembe, brought to him two handsome black goats, and before he could determine what he intended to do with them he had cut both their throats and let the blood run at his feet. The chief then departed to make it plain that he did not wait for a gift in return.

A similar ceremony is held among the Langouassis, upon the Kemo. "The chief," Dybowski relates, "advanced toward me, holding in his hand a white fowl, from which he pulled the feathers, regardless of its cries, for me to stick in my hair and beard, and at the same time threw a handful at my feet. Then, after giving me the poor fowl and two he-goats, he and all his suite seated themselves before me. The peace is made."

Much higher up on the Kemo, Dybowski came in contact—a rather menacing contact—with the Tokbos, who are allied with a tribe still more central, called the N'gapous. At first a man came to him, representing the chief. He pulled a handful of feathers from the white fowl which he brought as a gift and put them on his head, then gave him bread, millet, eggs, and tobacco. Soon after the chief, Krouma, presented himself, followed by a crowd of threatening warriors. Krouma evidently had decided not to make friends without a personal examination of the explorer. Seating himself before him, he closely watched all his movements. Having satisfied himself, he then got up to go away, and, taking a white fowl that one of the men carried, he went to the tent of Dybowski and threw a handful of feathers upon his head and feet. This is exactly the same ceremony, is it not, that the Dahomeans practiced before their deity?

Among the Bambaras, a mongrel tribe originally from central Africa, but now established upon the Niger, in about 8° to 10° west longitude, between the Moorish tribes on the north, the Peuls at the southwest and the east, and the Mandegnans on the south, the fowl and the goat play an equivalent and equally important rôle. Although a good number among them are Mus-sulmans, the fetich practices are maintained in the scattered villages. A pottery vase is their principal deity. They put on this a little human figure and a plate of iron surrounded with vulture feathers. after having spilled the blood of a fowl and goat. The ceremony is performed with an accompaniment of singing and the tom-tom. At other times the god is represented by a simple morsel of a tree root in a calabash. They often offer to him the fowls, which they sacrifice to the sound of an iron trumpet, together with millet and sorghum. By means of the fowls they also obtain a negative or affirmative answer to their inquiries. They cut the throats of the fowls partly through, as is done at Alger, and the response of the deity is yes or no if in dying they throw the heads backward or forward.*

In the region of the Upper Nile, among the Niams-Niams, the Bongos, and in the Ounyoro, analogous ceremonies are found. Islamism, however, has generally caused them to disappear in eastern Africa.—*M. Zabarowski, before the Anthropological Society of Paris.*

* Raffenel-Letourneau Sociologie, p. 283.

AUGUSTUS SCHULTZE, D. D., President of the Moravian College at Bethlehem, Pa., in 1889 made a first attempt toward compiling a brief grammar and vocabulary of the Eskimo dialect spoken on the Kuskokwin river, Alaska. This has now been augmented with new facts due to the missionary, Rev. John Kilbuck, and others working in that field and republished as a "Grammar and Vocabulary," at Bethlehem, Pa., 1894, of seventy pages. The vocabulary is Eskimo-English and English-Eskimo. Some hymns and colloquial phrases are added to the volume. The words of the vocabulary are partly syllabicated, and the alphabet used is a scientific one. A dual exists in the noun, as well as in the adjective, pronoun, and verb. The numeral system is quinary-vigesimal. There are two conjugations of the verb, the one with suffixes and the other without suffixes. They correspond in a general sense to our transitive and intransitive verb. Schultze's terminology of the verbal forms should be more precise, and instead of prepositions he should call the particles in question "postpositions." The work is so short that it can hardly be called anything else but a compendium, but the linguistic data are substantially correct.

A. S. GATSCHET.

IMPERIAL RUSSIAN GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY.—The report for 1892 of the Eastern Siberian branch of this Society has recently been published. In addition to a review of the numerous expeditions and explorations made and the publications on the subject, it contains an account of the various museums in eastern Siberia, including those at Tabolsk, Eniseisk, Minousinsk, Nerchinsk, Zakoutsk, and elsewhere. At these museums they have instructors who at certain hours of the day explain the collections to visitors.

JULIE MINDELEFF.
